

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - May 22, 2006

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today that six defendants pled guilty in federal district court in San Diego before United States District Court Judge Jeffrey Miller to felony alien smuggling charges stemming from a smuggling operation that endangered the lives of nearly 100 illegal aliens.

According to court documents, on February 10, 2006, a large group of undocumented aliens crossed the United States-Mexico border illegally and boarded three vans four miles east of the United States Port of Entry, San Ysidro, California. All three vans attempted, unsuccessfully, to evade apprehension by United States Border Patrol agents. One of the three vans drove the wrong way on Airway Road, crashed through a guard rail and rolled over several times, resulting in injuries, some serious, to several of the van's 27 occupants. Border Patrol agents arrested a total of 98 undocumented aliens who had been traveling in the three vans, including the suspected drivers.

Jose Espinoza-Garcia pled guilty to Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting for his role in driving the van that crashed through the guard rail and rolled over. Pascual Lopez-Godina pled guilty to Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting for his role in driving one of the vans containing approximately 34 illegal aliens. Lopez-Godina also pled guilty to two counts of Assault on a Federal Officer. In connection with his guilty pleas, Lopez-Godina admitted that he drove in the direction of a United States Border Patrol agent, causing the agent to take evasive action to avoid being hit by the van, and that he hit a marked Border Patrol vehicle causing it to fishtail.

Jose Jesus Correa-Avila pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting for his role in driving one of the vans containing approximately 36 illegal aliens. Jose de Jesus Guzman-Fregozo pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens for his role in assisting in the loading of aliens into one of the vans. Jaime Briones-Gonzalez pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens for his role in giving directions to the aliens in one of the vans. Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez pled guilty to Transportation of Illegal Aliens for his role in assisting in the loading of aliens into one of the vans and giving directions to the driver.

Sentencing is scheduled for August 10, 2006, at 9:00 a.m. before United States District Judge Jeffrey T. Miller.

DEFENDANTS

Pascual Lopez-Godina
Jose Espinoza-Garcia
Jose Jesus Correa-Avila
Jose de Jesus Guzman-Fregozo
Jaime Briones-Gonzalez
Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES AND PENALITIES

Pascual Lopez-Godina (Counts 2, 27, and 28)

Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, Title 18, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2

Mandatory Minimum Penalty: 3 years in prison; Maximum Penalty: 10 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Assault on a Federal Officer, Title 18, United States Code, Section 111(a) and (b) (two counts)

Maximum Penalty: 20 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine per count

Jose Espinoza-Garcia (Count 12)

Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting, Title 18, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 2

Mandatory Minimum Penalty: 3 years in prison; Maximum Penalty: 10 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Jose Jesus Correa-Avila (Count 7)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II)

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Jose de Jesus Guzman-Fregozo (Count 21)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II)

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Jaime Briones-Gonzalez (Count 17)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II)

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

Rodrigo Briones-Gonzalez (Count 17)

Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting, Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II)

Maximum Penalty: 5 years in prison and/or \$250,000 fine

AGENCY

United States Border Patrol